Partners for Rural Impact

Family Village

Facilitator Guidebook

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What is a Family Village

A family village is any group of child-rearing adults who offer each other mutual support and who work together to make positive change for children in their community. You may already be part of many family villages. You may be looking for a family village to call your own. You may work for an organization that wants to connect with families. You may be a school leader who wants to make space for families to grow and learn together. Whatever has brought you here, this guide will provide you with all the tools you need to get started with a Family Village or amplify the impact of an already existing village in your community.

Whether you assume the role of a trainer or a facilitator, the icons provided below will serve as valuable tools to direct you to relevant sections within the guidebook as you navigate its contents.

Trainer

Facilitator

Parents

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Welcome to Family Villages

We are thrilled that you are joining the Partners for Rural Impact Family Village to bring parents and caregivers together for mutual support and action.

When Dr. Dana Suskind released the book *Parent Nation* and the accompanying curriculum for Family Villages in April 2022, our team was inspired by Dr. Suskind's call to action. We share her beliefs that parents have strengths and resources that can change the landscape for raising children locally and nationally and that families also face the task of child-rearing with more stress and less support than ever before.

We immediately knew that we wanted to adapt the Family Village curriculum to fit the unique strengths and challenges that families face in rural communities throughout the United States. With the *Parent Nation* team's blessing, we created activities that center these ideas:

- Place – Each rural community and network of families have generational wisdom about needs and solutions in their community.
- Cradle to Career – Although the original Family Villages curriculum focuses on early childhood, we believe that engaging families at all ages is key to the success of rural people and communities.
- Storytelling and Creativity – Rural communities value our stories. They help us make and assert meaning that we may not see reflected in national narratives about family and child-rearing.

The set of activities in this booklet have been piloted with rural families. In our initial pilots, our facilitators were struck by the isolation that young families felt as they emerged from the pandemic and by the power of the Family Village to bring parents together for community action and connection.

As you bring Family Villages to the place you call home, please be in touch. We would love to hear from you and your village to learn what you are doing to make your community a place where rural children thrive.

Family Villages

Outcomes for Families

- Connecting with other parenting adults for stress reduction. One of the key elements of the Strengthening Families Framework.
- Understanding their personal goals for themselves and their children.
- Knowing how to better advocate for themselves and their children.
- Knowing how to develop and complete a self-selected community development project.

Outcomes for Organizations

- Bringing new generations of families to your organization.
- Building the volunteer capacity in your organization.
- Increasing community-wide connections for shared work.

Outcomes for Communities

- Building more buy-in from informed, engaged citizens.
- Empowering families in their contributions toward community-wide outcomes.
- Building community capacity for “doing with” families rather than “doing for” or “doing to.”

Outcomes for Children

Growing up with opportunities for upward mobility supported by strong families and communities.

Parent Nation Ideals

1. Everyone has inner strengths.
2. Every family wants the best for their children.
3. Every family deserves support.
4. Every family deserves choices.
5. We believe in opportunities for all children and families.
6. We are stronger together.

Inspired and adapted from Dana Suskind's *Parent Nation*

Getting Started with Your Family Village

What follows in this facilitation booklet are the outlines for four one-hour sessions that will allow your Family Village to build relationships and to take action on a project.

As you get ready to start your first Family Village, consider the following:

Where should I host my village? Is there a community space like a library or a church where families like to gather? Or is there a school PTA or other organization that would like to work together on a village? Do you need to host your village virtually because of transportation concerns?

How many people can reasonably be part of my village? We recommend starting with 10-15 in each group so that people can form strong bonds.

What time of day would work best for my village meetings? Do not limit yourself to just one. To reach all the families you want to engage, you may decide to host multiple villages at different times. For example, it may be easiest to engage parents of young babies or grandparent caregivers during the day. Families of high school students may find it easier to gather in the evening or virtually rather than in-person.

What supports will I need for a successful village? Will your village provide separate activities for children during the village meetings? Will you provide a meal? Will you ask participants to bring a dish to share? Is your village location accessible for participants with disabilities?

Families are most likely to want to join Family Villages if there is something fun and enriching for their child to do during the village sessions. Our organization has found success in partnering with local college groups and high school Family and Consumer Science Classes to offer kids' activities. As you develop children's activities, be sure that you have obtained background checks for anyone supervising children. If a high school class organizes activities, be sure they have a supervising teacher who is always present.

Augmenting the curriculum

Following session plans are filled with hands-on, creative activities to build community. Most likely, the families in your community have specific interests. Please supplement the activities with resources that serve your community. Additionally, you may already have an existing family group. Feel free to pull activities from each session to embed in your existing programming. **A Family Village is any group of child-rearing adults who work together to build relationships and strengthen their community as a good place to raise children.**

Here are some examples:

An affinity group of non-profit employees who are also parents of children under the age of five have a monthly potluck in the office. They add some of the art activities in the Family Village Curriculum to their potluck time, and they take on the project of refurbishing the lactation station in their office.

A group of grandparent caregivers gather monthly at a local church. Their facilitator leads them through the four sessions of Family Villages. The group meetings are 90 minutes long, so the facilitator reserves 30 minutes of the session to share resources and information that kinship caregivers need. At one session, a local attorney discusses custody law. At another, a social worker presents about the grieving process of children of incarcerated parents.

A local library hosts toddler story time each week. After each meeting, the children play with the library toys supervised by local babysitting club who are earning their Red Cross Babysitting certificate. In the same room, the parents have a chance to share a cup of coffee while keeping an eye on the children's activities. A librarian provides materials from Family Village as a creative outlet for parents.

A school coordinator hosts weekly FAFSA nights for high school families during FAFSA season. She asks the school counselor to lead interactive Family Village activities with the larger group while she meets individually with parents to answer specific questions about FAFSA. A core group of parents decides to make a banner encouraging FAFSA completion to hang outside the school, and another group makes a PSA video to reassure other families who are anxious about completing FAFSA.

Resources for Family Villages

PRI Family Villages were inspired by the work Dr. Dana Suskind in Parent Nation and the accompanying Parent Village Curriculum, including key principles, scenarios, and activities. Our approach is also informed by Dr. Karen Mapp's Dual Capacity Framework for Family and School Partnerships. Our Family Village activities are designed to enhance the

4 C's of Capabilities, Connections, Confidence, and Cognition. Finally, our approach draws on Dr. Joyce Epstein's **Six Types of Family Involvement**, with emphasis on **Parenting, Decision-Making, and Collaborating with the Community.**

The Session Plans

What follows are four session plans including a full script for the facilitator. We provide that script for facilitators who would like more support in each Family Village meeting. However, facilitators should make the sessions their own and use their own facilitation style and language to guide the activities. The script is here to help, but not to dictate.

Session Guides

Session One: Fostering Community

Goals

1.Participants agree to group norms.
2.Participants have begun making connections with each other and with the facilitator for the goal of mutual support.
3.Participants understand the scope and sequence of the sessions.
4.Participants think together about the Founding Principles of the Parent Nation.

Agenda

10 minutes	Welcome and Intros
10 minutes	Norms
5 minutes	Program Overviews
10 minutes	Getting to know one another
20 minutes	Founding Principles activity
5 minutes	Closing

Activity One	Description of the Activity
Welcome and Introductions	In this activity, you will welcome participants and have them introduce themselves to one another. If participants already know each other, you may choose to condense this activity.

Possible Script for the Host

Hello, everyone. My name is _____, and I am excited to welcome you to our Family Village where we will explore the idea of a Parent Nation, a society that supports parents. We will meet four times, each time exploring our hopes and dreams for our children and our community. The goal for our work together is to create a village of parents who can create change for a stronger community. First let us get to know one another. Please share:

- Your Name
- Your children's names and ages
- Why you decided to join this group

Activity Two	Description of the Activity
Norms	In this activity, you will work with the group to set norms for the group. You can find the Parent Nation group norms on page 10. If you choose not to use the script below to create your group norms, be sure that you include the norm of confidentiality and that you explain the circumstances when you would not be able to honor confidentiality (i.e., if someone discloses that they or someone else, particularly a child, is in imminent danger). You may choose to read the group norms aloud to the group or ask for volunteers to help for the reading. If you do not know the literacy levels in your group, you should plan to read the norms aloud. ***Norms Printout: Page 39***

Possible Script for the Host

Over the next four meetings, we will create our Family Village Community. We all want to be respected, understood, and able to grow as we think about our hopes and dreams for our children and our community. We are going to set some group expectations to help us create and stick to that positive, supportive environment.

Here are the Family Village Norms. **(Note to host: Read the headings of each norm, but not the full text.).**

- Confidentiality
- Mutual Respect
- Assume good intentions

- Make space, take space
- Honor our village as a space to help parents succeed

As a group, let us decide if we need to change any of these norms or if we need to add any. At this point, I will be quiet and open it up to you.

(Note to host: As group discusses norms, host can chart discussion on chart paper. You should be prepared to bring a clean copy of the norms back to post for each of your Family Village sessions.)

Activity Three	Description of the Activity
Program Overview	In this section, you will give participants an overview of the four sessions so that they know what to expect from their time together.

Possible Script for the Host

Today's session is the first of our four meetings together, and I will quickly go over the topic of each session so that you know what to expect.

Our Family Village can be mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts/uncles, foster parents, childcare providers, and other adults. We see a parent nation as a society that values and shares in the responsibility of nurturing, raising, and educating future generations. Parent Nation comes out of the work that Dr. Dana Suskind did in her book Parent Nation on the importance of healthy brain development in early childhood.

Today is session one. Our theme is **Fostering Community**. Our group is a support network where we can learn from one another, listen, and feel heard. We will start getting to know each other better, and we will explore Family Village ideals that honor parents and your life experiences.

In session two, our theme is **Hopes and Dreams**. We will dive deep into our hopes and dreams for our children, our families, and our communities, and we will also talk about what things help us as we are raising our families and what things set us back.

In session three, our theme is **Building on Our Strengths.** We will explore our values and our strengths and how they help us contribute to our community and our children's futures and to the future of all children.

In session four, our theme is **Taking Action**. Thinking about our hopes and dreams and our values and strengths, we will plan for actions that we want to take to make those hopes and dreams possible and to make our community stronger for families.

Activity Four	Description of the Activity
Getting to Know Our Community	The goal for this activity is for participants to begin getting to know one another. If your group is already well-acquainted, you may choose to shorten the activity. Even if your group is already well-established, be sure to do something creative that lets your participants learn something new about each other. Set Up: Write 1,2,3,4 on four pieces of paper. Tape one number in each corner of the room.

Possible Script for the Host

This activity is called Four Corners. We will go through a series of questions that have four options. You will choose which option best describes you and move to that corner of the room.

(Note to host: Read through the questions and have participants move to their corner. Move fairly quickly through the questions but give participants a little chance to chat at each.)

- Where would you most like to take a vacation?
  - The mountains
  - The beach
  - A big city
  - Anywhere cold

- What is your favorite drink?
  - Soda/pop
  - Water
  - Tea
  - Coffee

- Favorite ice cream?
  - Chocolate
  - Vanilla
  - Cookies & Cream
  - Strawberry

- Least favorite household chore:
  - Bathrooms
  - Dishes
  - Laundry
  - Vacuuming

Activity Five	Description of the Activity
Getting Grounded on Founding Principles	The goal for this activity is for participants to become familiar with the ideals behind Family Villages. If your group is smaller, you may decide to do this activity together as a whole group. If you have a larger group, you will divide them into pairs. Divide the group into pairs or triples to read the principle on the front of the cards and to answer the questions on the back of the cards. Then come back together for a group share-out. Depending on the size of your group, each pair may only see one or two principles.

Possible Script for the Host

(Divide your group into pairs. Then give each pair one-two Founding Principles Cards until all are distributed).

We are going to look at the principles of the Parent Nation now. On your cards, you have one of the founding principles of Family Villages, based on the work of Dr. Dana Suskind. In your pair, read the principle and the questions on the back. Discuss the question in your pair. You will have about seven minutes to do this.

(Note to host: Circulate among your pairs as they talk.)

Let us come back together and have a quick share-out of your conversation. Let us have each pair share the principle they discussed.

(Note to host: Allow time for each pair to talk.)

Now that we have heard all of the groups, what big takeaways about parenting and the support for parents do you have?

Activity Six	Description of the Activity
Closing	In this activity, sum up what you did today and make sure everyone knows the logistics for the next meeting.

Possible Script for the Host

Today, we started building our Family Village by getting to know one another, and we explored the principles that will guide our time together. Next time, we will be diving deep into our hopes and dreams with some fun, creative activities. Our next meeting is **(give logistics).** Does anyone have any comments or suggestions for what comes next?

Session Two: Hopes and Dreams

Goals

1. Participants continue to build connections and a system of mutual support.
2. Participants dive deep into their hopes and dreams for their children.
3. Participants think about barriers that may get in the way of those hopes and dreams.

Agenda

10 minutes	Welcome and Intros
25 minutes	Hopes and Dreams
10 minutes	Scenario Gallery Walk
10 minutes	Debrief
5 minutes	Closing

Activity One	Description of the Activity
Welcome and Introductions	In this activity, you **will** welcome participants and have them re-introduce themselves to one another. If participants already know each other, you may choose to condense this activity.

Possible Script for the Host

Welcome back, everyone. My name is _____, and I am excited to be back together in our Family Village. Let us take a moment to reintroduce ourselves. **(Note to host: You may choose to have a fun check-in question to help participants feel comfortable.)**

Last time, we set some norms and expectations for our time together. Let us revisit them: confidentiality, mutual respect, assume good intentions, make space and take space, and honor our village as a space to help parents succeed. **(Note to host: Hang up your chart paper with norms. Remember to list any norms that you added to the Family Village List.)**

Are we still all good with these? Do we need to add anything?

Today, we are going to be diving into our hopes and dreams for our families as we get to know one another better, and we will talk about some of the things that help us and hinder us as parents.

Activity Two	Description of the Activity
Hopes and Dreams Art Activity	In this activity, you will help participants tap into their creative sides to think about their hopes and dreams for their children. You will need large pieces of construction paper cut into the shape of a heart, old magazines and catalogs for the collage, glue sticks, scissors, and markers/crayons. ***Hopes and Dream Example: Page 47***

Possible Script for the Host

Today we are going to think about our hopes and dreams for our children and our families. What do we want for them as they grow up? What opportunities do we want them to have? And we are going to do this by being a little creative today! You have a construction paper heart and materials to make a collage. We are going to spend the next 20 minutes making a collage of our dreams for our children. Here is an example of mine. **(Note to host: Prep your hopes and dreams collage before the session so you have an example to show participants.)** You can write words on your heart, draw with the markers, find photos from the magazines. Do whatever you want to have fun with this project! Work together and dream big.

As you create your collage and look for pictures in the magazines, think about these questions: **(Note to host: Give each participant a handout with the questions written down, post on chart paper, or print this poster.)**

- Where would I like our family to be living in five years?
- What job would I like to be doing in five years?
- What would I like to see my child do after high school? (college, military, trade school, community college, etc.)
- What strengths and gifts does my child have that I think will contribute to a happy future for them?
- What would I like for our family to do together in our free time?
- What would I like to accomplish in the next five years?
- What would I like to see my children accomplish in the next five years?

(Note to host: Participants may be nervous about doing an art activity. Be sure to circulate in the room to offer praise and encouragement. Allow up to 20 minutes for the activity.)

Let us come back together now and share our collages with one another. Take a moment to tell us a bit about your hopes and your dreams for your children.

(Note to host: Give participants time to share)

As we continue throughout our time as a Family Village, we will remember these hopes and dreams to guide our thinking about what we want for our community and how our community can best support families. We know that we will have to take action to make these things happen, but we will remember to always stay centered in the heart of our love for our family.

Activity Three	Description of the Activity
Scenario Gallery Walk	In this activity, you will have the group consider some scenarios that often face parents and have them brainstorm solutions. Solutions can range from the personal to the national. No idea is too small or too big. You will need to post each scenario on the wall of your room, and you will need to give each participant a pen and stack of Post-its. If reading and writing are difficult for your participants, you may want to do this activity as a group discussion where you read the scenarios and then the group talks.

Possible Script for the Host

Thank you for thinking about our big dreams for our families. We also know that life can get in the way of those dreams. We are going to spend the next few minutes thinking about problems that families often face in our communities. Most of us face difficult moments in our daily lives that affect our ability to parent and care for our children. We often have to get creative to solve problems, and sometimes the trade-offs we make are not good for us and our families. This next activity will get us thinking about what would help us beat the obstacles. We can think of our solutions as a way to recognize that "it doesn't have to be this way" and explore the building blocks for a *parent nation.*

I have posted some scenarios around the room. I am going to ask you to read each scenario and then brainstorm some ideas that could help solve the problem. No idea is too big or too small. Your idea could be something the parent could do, something their friends and neighbors could do, something the entire community could do, or something the entire state or government might make happen. Right now, do not think about what is impossible or possible. The goal is just to generate as many ideas as possible. In our next sessions, we will talk about the possible actions we might take in our communities. But today, is all about dreaming.

(Note to host: Think about the group you are working with. You may need to change the scenarios before the session to fit your community.)

Scenarios: Page 49-51

(Note to host: As participants circle around the room, offer support and encouragement. You should also have a stack of Post-its. If you see gaps in the solutions being posted, particularly the "big picture" solutions, you can fill those in.)

Activity Four	Description of the Activity
Debrief	Have a conversation around the scenarios to debrief.

Possible Script for the Host

Let us come back together as a group and talk about the scenarios you studied.

(Note to host: Questions you can ask if your group is not chatty.)

- Did these scenarios seem real to you?
- Have you ever had a similar challenge like one of these situations and how did you handle it?
- Are there easy changes that organizations could make to address some of these situations, for example, the parent-teacher conference scenario?
- What problems seem too big for a parent and her friends/ neighbors to solve on their own?
- Did any of the solutions people wrote on the Post-its give you hope for big changes that might be possible?

Activity Five	Description of the Activity
Closing	In this activity, sum up what you did today and make sure everyone knows the logistics for the next meeting. You might consider doing a fun checkout question if you feel like the group is feeling down after the scenarios.

Possible Script for the Host

Today, we continued building our Family Village by thinking about our hopes and dreams, and we talked about some of the real-world problems families face. Next time, we will be diving deep into our strengths and values that we can bring to solving problems for families in our community. Our next meeting is **(give logistics)**. Does anyone have any comments or suggestions for what comes next?

Session Three: Building on Our Strengths

Goals

1. Participants continue to build connections and a system of mutual support.
2. Participants explore their strengths and values, which they can draw upon to take action.
3. Participants understand the diversity of strengths in the room and how those strengths can work together to create change and improve outcomes for families.

Agenda

10 minutes	Welcome and Intros
15 minutes	Values Sort
30 minutes	Strengths Reflection Activity
5 minutes	Closing

Activity One	Description of the Activity
Welcome and Introductions	In this activity, you will welcome participants and have them re-introduce themselves to one another. If participants already know each other, you may choose to condense this activity.

Possible Script for the Host

Welcome back, everyone. My name is _____, and I am excited to be back together in our Family Village. Let us take a moment to reintroduce ourselves. **(Note to host: You may choose to have a fun check-in question to help participants feel comfortable.)**

Here is a quick run down of our norms: confidentiality, mutual respect, assume good intentions, make space and take space, and honor our village as a space to help parents succeed. **(Note to host: Hang up your chart paper with norms. Remember to list any norms that you added to the Family Village List.)**

Are we still all good with these? Do we need to add anything?

Today we are going to be diving into our values and strengths as a Family Village, and we will talk about how we might use those strengths to take action on some of the problems we talked about last time.

Activity Two	Description of the Activity
Values Sort	In this activity, you will prime participants to start thinking about their values to uncover the kind of action they would like to take. You will need copies of the Values Sort Worksheet. ***Worksheet Located on Page 53***

Possible Script for the Host

The big goal of Family Villages is for us to work together to take an action to make our community stronger and more supportive of parents and parenting. Whatever we decide to do should fit in with what we value, and it should be fun. As a first step, we will think about what values we have here in the room with us. This is an exercise where you are going to mark the top ten values on this page that appeal to you. There are two spaces left blank if there are values that are important to you but are not listed. The hard part is choosing just ten, because we would all probably agree that all of the things on this list are good things. The hard part is deciding which are central to you as a person. So let us take ten minutes to choose ten. Do not overthink it. What does your gut tell you? **(Note to host: Allow time for participants to complete the exercise, around eight minutes. Move on if participants finish sooner.)**

Now let us see where we are as a group. Find a buddy and see what values you have in common and what values are different. Chat with your buddy for two minutes and then we will switch up so that you get to talk to more than one person. **(Note to host: Help partner people up if they are hesitant. Use a timer to let folks talk for two minutes and then repeat one more time.)**

Let us come back together as a group and debrief. What are the values we share in common as a Family Village? **(Note to host: Allow time for sharing)**

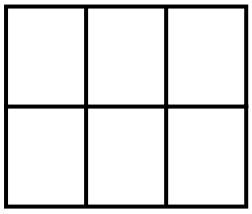
Activity Three	Description of the Activity
Strengths Arts Activity	In this activity, you will have participants reflect on their strengths to help identify the skills you have in the room. You will need pens/pencils and sheets of copy paper.

Possible Script for the Host

Now that we have thought about our values, let us identify some of the strengths that we have in our Family Village. What are we good at? We are going to do a private reflection activity for a few moments and then we will come back together.

(Note to host: Hand out blank paper and pens/pencils).

First, we need to fold our paper and make six squares. Your paper will look like this after you fold it and unfold it again.



Now I am going to ask you six questions. One for each square. Take a few minutes to jot down a few words or do a doodle or a drawing that helps you reflect on the questions. This is private exercise to you. We will not be sharing out, except for one word on a Post-it note at the end. So, you can be as unfiltered as you want. Brag on yourself and the things you are good at!

1. What is an activity that you loved doing as a child but maybe do not do anymore?
2. What is a time when you think you had a positive influence on someone else?
3. What was a time when you felt like you were a part of a team?
4. What is something that you would like to learn to do?
5. What is a time when you accomplished a goal?
6. What is something that you are good at?

(Note to host: Allow time for participants to reflect and complete the activity. If a participant feels lost or says, "I'm not good at anything," this is a good time to have a side conversation with them to encourage them and help them identify something they are good at. You can also bring up their strengths which you have noticed during your time together.)

Thanks for taking that time for reflection. We will have a chance to debrief in a moment. But first take one of your sticky notes out and write down one thing that you are good at and place it on the board.

(Note to host: Give participants time to complete the activity.)

Now let us look at some of the strengths we have in the room. We have people who are good at **(read out the sticky notes)**.

Finally, let us debrief. Does anyone have anything they would like to share from this activity and their reflections?

Activity Four	Description of the Activity
Closing	In this activity, sum up what you did today and make sure everyone knows the logistics for the next meeting.

Possible Script for the Host

Today, we continued building our Family Village by thinking about the strengths in the room and about our values. Our next meeting is our last official meeting, and we will be talking about actions that we might take together as next steps in our Family Village in our community. Our next meeting is **(give logistics)**.

Session Four: Taking Action

Goals

1. Participants continue to build connections and a system of mutual support.
2. Parents design an "ideal state" for their community (*miracle question*).
3. Parents learn about organizations and people working for children in their state.
4. Participants make commitments for next steps for action to take.

Agenda

10 minutes	Welcome and Intros
15 minutes	Community Dreams
25 minutes	Action Planning
10 minutes	Closing

Activity One	Description of the Activity
Welcome and Introductions	In this activity, you will welcome participants and have them re-introduce themselves to one another. If participants already know each other, you may choose to condense this activity.

Possible Script for the Host

Welcome back, everyone. My name is _____, and I am excited to be back together in our Family Village. Let us take a moment to reintroduce ourselves. **(Note to host: You may choose to have a fun check-in question to help participants feel comfortable.)**

Here is a quick run down of our norms: Confidentiality, mutual respect, assume good intentions, make space and take space, and honor our village as a space to help parents succeed. **(Note to host: Hang up your chart paper with norms. Remember to list any norms that you added to the Family Village List.)**

Are we still all good with these? Do we need to add anything?

Today is our last official meeting of our Family Village. Over the last month, we have explored our values and our strengths. We have talked about how tough it can be to raise children in our communities. Today we are going to dig into what we want our community to look like for parents and decide on an action we can take toward making that community vision real. We will also explore how we want to continue together as a family village.

Activity Two	Description of the Activity
Our Dream Community	In this activity, you are going to ask participants a "Miracle Question." Participants will imagine what the community would be and look like if they woke up one morning and it was in an ideal state. You will need a very large piece of paper and markers so participants can collaborate on this art project. Bulletin board paper is ideal because of the size. If you are not in a school setting, you can sometimes buy bulletin board paper at Dollar Tree. You can also substitute plain brown craft paper available at the Post Office or Walmart.

Possible Script for the Host

Today, we are going to focus on what we want for our community and how to make our community a stronger place for families and parents. To narrow down what we are actually going to do, first we need to know what we want. And we are going to do that by creating some art together.

And so, I am going to ask you a miracle question. What if you woke up one morning and our community was exactly what it should be to be the best place to raise children? Problems are gone. All the resources we need would be here.

I have got this big paper here and markers, and we are going to take some time to make a map or a drawing of what our community would look like if we woke up to the best version of our place. Maybe there are more places for parents to work and safe places for children to stay while their parents are at work?

Maybe there are more playgrounds? Maybe there is a drug treatment center where babies can stay with their moms. Maybe there is a pediatrician's office. Whatever you dream could be in our community, put it on the map. Dust off those elementary school drawing skills where you made a building out of a rectangle or a square and a triangle. Let us get our dream community on paper.

(Note to host: Give time for participants to create the map. Encourage creativity and big thinking. Try to keep participants from narrowing down to only the possible.)

Note to host: If conversation is rich as participants work together, you do not need to have a debrief. If there has bit been much talking, lead the participants in a description of their map.

Activity Three	Description of the Activity
Action Planning	In this activity, you will help participants plan their first action toward a Parent Nation in their community. You will help them work through the Action Planning Template and decide on next steps in their work as a Family Village. There are also some example Action Planning Templates to use or share with participants. Some participants may decide not to continue after the original four-week commitment. ***Blank Template: Page 54***

Possible Script for the Host

I love all the dreams you have for our community. We are going to take the last few minutes of our family village to think about how we might begin making one of those dreams a reality.

Over the course of our time together, we have gotten to know one another better, we have dug deep into the challenges that face families in our community, we have talked about our hopes and dreams for our families and for our community, and we've thought about the strengths and values we bring to the work of making a strong community for families.

Thinking about all that we have discussed, what is one thing we might want to do first? Our first steps should be small and aim for small wins. What is something you would like to do?

(Note to host: Allow time for ideas to emerge. It may be that your group wants to work together, or they may want to take smaller separate actions. If they are planning a group activity, complete one action planning page.)

Now that we have decided what we want to work on, let us get into the nitty-gritty of what we will do next. Here is a planning form to help us think through what we need to do.

(Note to host: Help participants fill out each section of the Action Plan.)

Debrief Action Plan and make plans to work together to complete the project. Make space for participants who cannot make further commitments to opt out. For those continuing to work together on a project, be sure to set up next steps to be taken together.

Activity Four	Description of the Activity
Closing	In this activity, sum up the experience, thank parents for their participation.

Possible Script for the Host

Thank you all for the gift of your time, creativity, thinking, and community over the last month as we worked to build a small family village, committed to our communities and to support parents and families. You have worked hard. Thank you.

Now That You Have Completed Your Own Family Village

Congratulations on completing your first Family Village. We hope that you benefited from bringing together families for connection and change. Here are some questions to consider as you look forward.

Your participants came up with ideas for community development projects. Are they ready to implement their plans independently? Is there a role for your organization to play? Are there supports you can offer to make the project successful?

Do your Family Village participants want to continue to meet? Is there space and personnel your organization can offer?

How will your organization debrief? Are your participants ready to host their own Family Village? Undoubtedly, there are many more families in your community yearning for connection. Can you share this booklet with family leaders and provide space and mentorship for their first Family Village?

We want to hear from you. What did you learn in your first Family Village? What feedback do you have to share with us? What stories would you like to share from your village?

To connect, please contact FamilyVillages@partnersrural.org

Appendices

Appendix A
Lesson One

Village Norms

Confidentiality

Trust is important. What is shared in our Village stays in our Village. What is learned in our Village can leave our Village.

Mutual Respect

We will listen to each other and will each be heard. There are no wrong answers. We need everyone's wisdom.

Assume Good Intentions

We all want the best for our children. We will withhold judgment of our fellow Village members when they open up and share about their parenting struggles. We will offer advice only when asked.

Make Space, Take Space

We are open to others' opinions and share our own opinions even when we do not agree. We will pause and give everyone a chance to contribute.

Honor Our Village as a Space to Help Parents Succeed

We will protect this space to discuss our needs and aspirations for a society that supports parents, particularly in the earliest years of our children's lives, so that all of our children will be on the path to success. We will only engage in topics that advance this specific aspiration.

From original Parent Village curriculum available for download at www.parentnation.org

Everyone Has Inner Strengths

All parents have strengths, skills and knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation. Parents have powerful gut instincts to guide our decisions. Expert knowledge is helpful to parents but should build on our existing knowledge and hopes and dreams for our families.

Share a time during a challenging situation when you instinctively knew what to do as a parent.

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Share a time when you wished you had more information or resources before making a parenting decision.

Partners for Rural Impact

Every Family Wants the Best for Their Children

All parents want to give their children the best chance in life and opportunities to reach their potential. Parents should be respected for the many different ways we can approach raising children.

Share one value that you want to teach your child.

Share a lesson you want to pass on to your children.

Every Family Deserves Choices

All parents should have the opportunity to make choices for their families. The options available should not be limited by location, race, gender, income, or other social factors. Possibilities exist when we all have choices.

Share a tough choice you had to make as a parent.

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As a parent, share what resources would have made a tough decision easier to make.

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Every Family Deserves Support

Resources and strong communities help parents make good choices for their families. Without support, it's too hard to raise thriving children.

Share a time when you received support from an unexpected person or place.

Share a source of support that you think all parents should have.

We Are Stronger Together

As parents, we have so much in common. We are unified by our love for our children, our desire for them to succeed, and our struggles to raise them without much support. Working together makes our voices stronger and clearer.

Share a time when another parent or group of parents helped you.

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Share a time when you helped another parent with a challenge.

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We Believe in Opportunities for All Children and Families

The burden of inequity unfairly hurts communities facing poverty, chronic stress, and barriers to resources. Creating change for us all begins with the most vulnerable.

Share a resource that you have access to that you think others might not.

Share something that you think is important to parents that not everyone has access to.

Appendix B

Lesson Two

Hopes and Dreams Collage

Where would I like our family to be living in 5 years?

What job would I like to be doing in 5 years?

What would I like to accomplish in the next five years?

What would I like to see my child do after high school? (college, military, trade school, community college, etc.)

What would I like for our family to do together in our free time?

What would I like to see my children accomplish in the next five years?

What strengths and gifts does my child have that I think will contribute to a happy future for them?

Appendix C

Lesson Three

Your 2nd grader has the opportunity for an afterschool activity and really wants to go, but you will need to provide transportation. The activity is at the same time as your 16-year-old's job after school. Your family has one car, and the 16-year-old uses it to get to and from work.

The middle school is having open house, and your daughter is in 6th grade. You want to go because the school doesn't send home as much communication as the elementary school did, but the event is from 3:30-5:30. Your work is 40 minutes away from the school, and you can't leave work before 5:00.

Your boss canceled your Tuesday shift and asked you to work a double shift on Friday. Your baby goes to a family daycare, and you have to pick her up by 5 PM. You won't get off work on Friday until 8 PM if you take the double shift. You know the extra money will help, and your boss gets angry when people need to change their schedule. But you don't know what to do with your baby.

You work two jobs to provide for your family. Even though you're working as hard as you can, you often don't have money for groceries at the end of the pay period. You worry about not making rent if you got sick and had to miss a shift at work.

You need to take your two-year-old to the doctor because you're worried that he isn't saying many words yet. But the doctor's office is only open during your work hours, and you can't take time off.

Your son's kindergarten teacher wants to meet with you because he is behind where the other students are, but you don't have a car to drive to the school for a meeting.

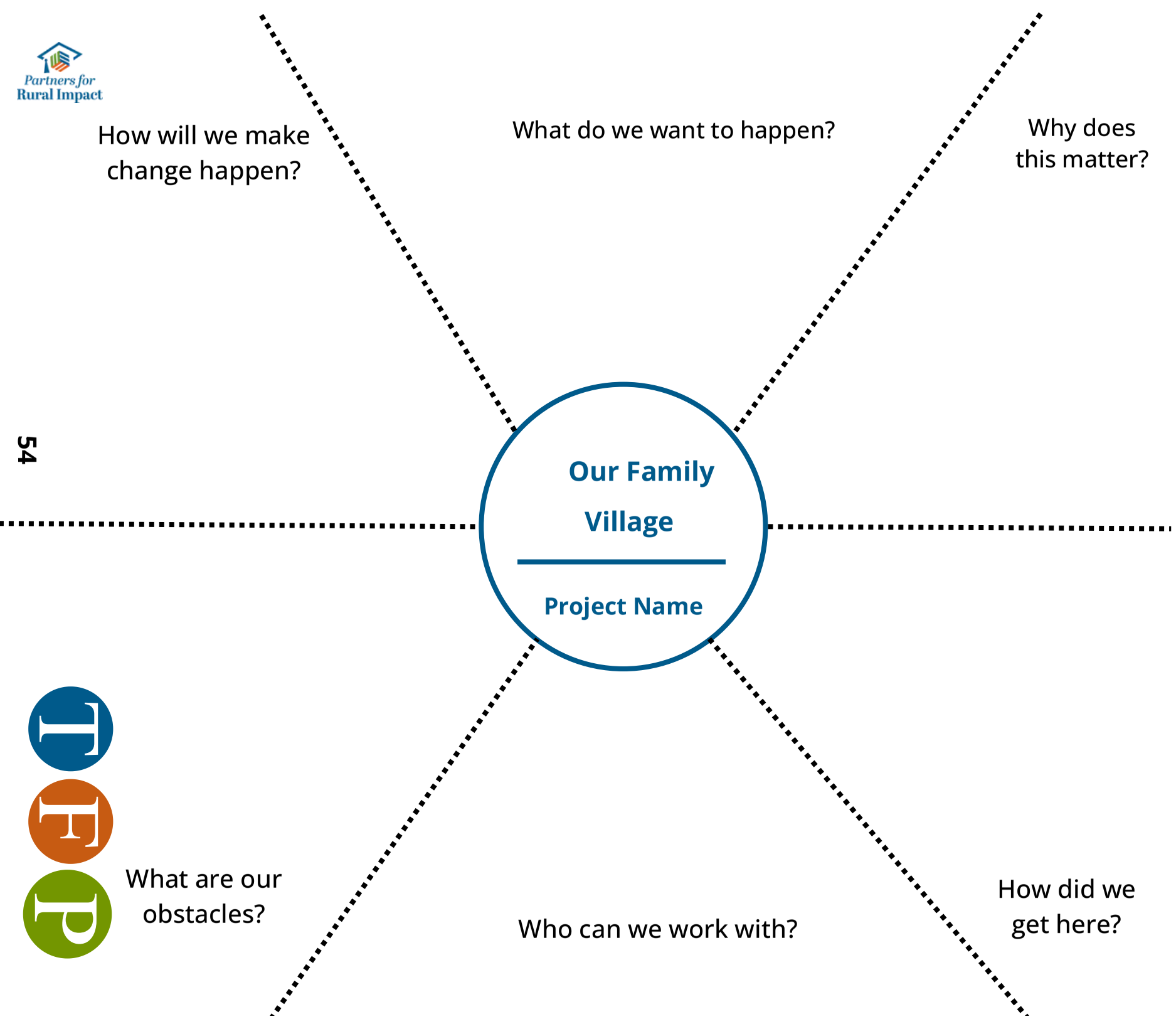
Appendix D

Lesson Four

What do you Value Most?

Choose ten values that appeal most to you.

Love	Family	Money	Humor	Integrity
Belonging	Courage	Loyalty	Honesty	Adventure
Peace	Interdependence	Success	Ambition	Friendship
Healthy Living	Independence	Power	Knowledge	Hobbies
Spirituality	Open-mindedness	Respect	Faith	Thrift
Simplicity	Fairness	Fun	Freedom	Justice
Adventure	Education	Hard Work	Resourcefulness	Curiosity
Compassion	Empathy	Beauty	Passion	Reliability
Leadership	Honor	Popularity	Wisdom	Resilience
Bravery	Optimism	Perseverance	Team work	Community


How will we make change happen?
What do we want to happen?
Why does this matter?
Our Family Village
Project Name
What are our obstacles?
Who can we work with?
How did we get here?

Action Planning Template for Facilitators

1. Are you building a New Family Village from scratch or adding Family Village content to an existing group? If existing group, skip to question 11.
2. Who is on your **Villa**ge planning team?
3. Do you need to recruit more members for your team to deliver the program?
4. What programs in your community have an interest in this content? (21st Century programs, Community Schools, Libraries, Churches, Charities, YMCA, Summer Programming, Laundromat, etc.)
5. What is your target audience for this village? How will you get input from target audience for what times and days' work best for their schedules?
6. How will you recruit families? What information will you share with them?
7. Where will you host your family village?
8. How will you reserve space?
9. If you do not own or work at the venue, who will be responsible for getting keys?
10. Who will be responsible for closing up and returning keys?
11. When and how long will the meetings be? (Recommended **one** hour per meeting without food.)
12. What is your planned start date?
13. What is the planned end date?
14. Can you offer incentives (books, gift cards) to families who participate?
15. If not, who on your team can seek community donations for incentives?
16. Can you offer food at your village?
17. If not and you would like to offer food, who on your team can seek sponsors for food?
18. Can you offer childcare at your village?
19. Who on your team can find childcare volunteers?

20. Who needs a background check for your village (anyone working directly with children)? Who can pay for background checks?
21. Who has a process for already running background checks? Who will be responsible for preparing materials for each session?
22. Who will be responsible for leading each component of each session?
23. Who will be responsible for set up in the venue?
24. Who will be responsible for clean up in the venue?
25. Who will collect pre and post surveys from family participants?
26. Who will collect surveys from volunteers about the program?

Planning Grid Session One

Meeting Planning

Action Item Review

Action Plan

Planning Grid Session Two

Meeting Planning

Action Item Review

Action Plan

Planning Grid Session Three

Meeting Planning

Action Item Review

Action Plan

Planning Grid Session Four

Meeting Planning

Action Item Review

Action Plan

Meeting Notes

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Next Steps for the Facilitator

- Coaching Call
- Planning and Implementation Support
- Midpoint Check-in
- Summative Evaluation Support
- Supporting Debriefs and Next Steps